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CDFA Announces Process, Dates for Pierce's Disease Assessment Referendum

Sacramento, CA, January 26, 2005 — The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) today announced key dates and details for the upcoming referendum on whether to continue the Pierce's disease (PD) assessment, which funds research aimed at proactively addressing the threat posed by PD and the Glassy-winged sharpshooter (GWSS). The department announced its intention to send the ballots to California's winegrape growers during the week of May 16, 2004.

CDFA said ballots would be sent out to all of the state's winegrape growers who paid the assessment for the 2004 harvest. Once the ballots are sent out, they must be returned within 30 days to be counted. At least 40 percent of eligible growers must cast ballots to validate the referendum. Passage of the referendum requires either:

- ❑ Of those who vote, 65 percent vote "yes" and the "yes" voters must have paid the majority of the assessment that was paid by those who voted, or
- ❑ Of those who vote, a majority vote "yes," and the "yes" voters must have paid 65 percent or more of the assessment that was paid by those who voted.

Following the devastating 1999 outbreak of the Glassy-winged sharpshooter in Temecula, the industry quickly mobilized in support of a self-assessment to halt the pest's spread and fund PD research.

"To date the current assessment has raised nearly \$14 million," said Bob Wynn, CDFA's statewide coordinator for the Pierce's Disease Control Program. "More importantly, by assessing themselves, growers demonstrated their concern to government officials about the PD/GWSS threat, and we've been able to leverage those funds ten-fold with state and federal grants to help contain the GWSS."

The PD/GWSS Board, made up of winegrape growers and grower/vintners from around the state, advises the CDFA secretary on expenditure of assessment funds to ensure that the research is responsive to the needs of the grower community. Over 100 research projects are already being funded, providing the science needed to effectively control the pest while also building a research foundation to better understand and address Pierce's disease.

For more information about the referendum and how assessment funds have been used to protect the livelihood of California's winegrape industry, log on to

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/mkt/mkt/winery.html>

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